

Procedures for School Bus Drivers when Emergency Vehicles are Approaching Making use of Audible and Visuals Signals

Section 56-5-2360. Approach of Emergency Vehicles.

- (a) Upon the immediate approach of an authorized emergency vehicle making use of an audible signal meeting the requirements of Section 56-5-4970 and visual signals meeting the requirements of Section 56-5-4700 or of a police vehicle properly and lawfully making use of an audible signal only, the driver of every other vehicle shall yield the right-of-way and shall immediately drive to a position parallel to, and as close as possible, to the right hand edge or curb of the roadway clear of any intersection and shall stop and remain in such position until the authorized emergency has passed, except when otherwise directed by a police officer.
- (b) This section shall not operate to relieve the driver of an authorized emergency vehicle from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons using the highway.

Section 56-5-4970. Emergency Vehicles.

Any authorized emergency vehicle may be equipped with a siren, whistle or bell capable of emitting sound audible under normal conditions from a distance of not less than five hundred feet and of a type approved by the Department, but such siren shall not be used except when such vehicle is operated in response to an emergency call or in the immediate pursuit of an actual or suspected violator of the law, in which latter event the driver of such vehicle shall sound such siren when necessary to warn pedestrians and other drivers of the approach thereof.

Section 56-5-4700. Emergency Vehicles, School Buses.

- (a) Every authorized emergency vehicle shall, in addition to any other equipment and distinctive markings required by this chapter, be equipped with a siren, exhaust whistle or bell capable of giving an audible signal.
- (b) Every school bus and every authorized emergency vehicle shall, in addition to any other equipment and distinctive markings required by this chapter, be equipped with signal lamps mounted as high and as widely spaced laterally as practicable, which shall be capable of displaying to the front two alternately flashing red lights located at the same level and to the rear two alternately flashing red lights located at the same level, and these lights shall have sufficient intensity to be visible at five hundred feet in normal sunlight. Provided, that vehicles of any fire department or funeral home when equipped with a mounted, oscillating, rotating or flashing red light, visible in all directions for a distance of five hundred feet in normal sunlight, shall not be required to have additional signal lamps.
- (c) A police vehicle when used as an emergency vehicle may but need not be equipped with alternately flashing red lights as specified herein. Also, such vehicle may in lieu of the alternately flashing red lights be equipped with a special dome-mounted oscillating, rotating, or flashing red or blue light visible from a distance of five hundred feet to the front in normal sunlight; provided, that it shall be unlawful for any person to possess any flashing, oscillating or rotating blue light on any vehicle except one used primarily for law enforcement purposes. Provided, further, that after January 1, 1967, all police vehicles when used as an authorized emergency vehicle shall then be equipped with dome-mounted, oscillating, rotating or flashing blue lights visible from a distance of five hundred feet.
- (d) The alternately flashing lighting described in subsection (b) of this section shall not be used on any other than an authorized emergency vehicle. Provided, that a school bus may use the alternately flashing red lights described in subsection (b), or red flashing lights in the rear and amber flashing lights in the front.
- (e) The use of signal equipment described herein shall impose upon drivers of other vehicles the obligation to yield right-of-way and stop as prescribed in Section 56-5-2360 and 56-5-2770

Section 56-5-2770. School Buses; signals and markings.

- (a) The driver of a vehicle meeting or overtaking from either direction any school bus stopped on the highway shall stop before reaching the bus where there in operation on the bus flashing red lights specified in State Department of Education Regulations and Specifications pertaining to School Buses, and the driver shall not proceed until the bus resumes motion or the flashing red lights are no longer actuated.
- (b) Every school bus shall be equipped with red or red and amber visual signals meeting the requirements of State Department of Education Regulations and Specifications Pertaining to School Buses, which may be actuated by the driver whenever, but only whenever, the bus is stopped or preparing to stop on the highway for the purpose of receiving or discharging school children. A driver shall not actuate the special visual signal in designated school bus loading areas if the bus is entirely off the roadway.
- (c) Every school bus shall bear upon its front and rear plainly visible signs containing the words "SCHOOL BUS" in letters not less than eight inches in height. When a bus is being operated upon a highway for purposes other than the actual transportation of children either to or from school or school related activities, all markings indicating "SCHOOL BUS" shall be covered or concealed.
- (d) The driver of a vehicle need not stop upon meeting a stopped school bus:
 - 1. When the bus is in a passenger loading zone completely off the main travel lanes and when pedestrians are not allowed to cross the roadway.
 - 2. On highways where the roadways are separated by an earth or raised concrete median.
- (e) The driver of a vehicle must stop upon meeting or passing a stopped school bus:
 - 1. On any two-lane highway.
 - 2. On any four-lane or multi-lane highway where opposing highway is separated only by painted lines on the roadway or a narrow gravel median.
 - 3. When overtaking a school bus which has red or amber signals actuated.

Scenarios:

1. An Emergency Vehicle approaches a School Bus with the Stop Arm Extended for Loading Passengers.

A bus driver seeing an emergency vehicle(s) approaching from the front or rear, having activated any of the required lights which begins the procedure for loading students should continue with their procedure. Any effort to abort the process could confuse both the students who are already enroute to the bus and the operator of the emergency vehicle(s). By continuing the process, the operator of the emergency vehicle(s) understands what is taking place and should react according to Section 56-5-2360 Subsection (b). However, should the bus driver observe an approaching emergency vehicle(s) as the loading process is completed, the driver of the bus should deactivate all stop lights, activate the four-way flashers, (hazard lights), and remain stopped until the emergency vehicle(s) has passed.

2. An Emergency Vehicle approaching a School Bus with the Stop Arm Extended for Off- Loading Passengers.

When a bus driver is approaching a stop to off-load students and observes an emergency vehicle(s) approaching from the front or rear, the driver should bring the bus to a complete stop with the warning lights activated. Once stopped, activate the four-way flashers, (hazard lights), and remain stopped with the door closed until the emergency vehicle(s) has passed. Once the emergency vehicle(s) has passed, continue with off loading procedure.

3. Four-Lane or Multi-Lane Highway with or without median, where an Emergency Vehicle is approaching a School Bus from the front.

A school bus driver, observing an emergency vehicle(s) approaching from the front on a four-lane or multi-lane highway, should continue normal mode of operation. On this type roadway, the continuing of normal operation should not interfere with the progress of the emergency vehicle(s) unless opposing traffic lanes where completely obstructed. In the event this happened and the operator of the emergency vehicle(s) was forced to travel in opposing traffic lanes, you would conform to the law by immediately reducing your speed, pulling to the right edge or curb of the roadway and stopping. Remain stopped with the four-way flashers, (hazard lights), activated until the emergency vehicle(s) has passed.

4. Four Lane or Multi-Lane Highway with or without median, where an Emergency Vehicle is approaching a School Bus from the rear.

A bus driver observing an emergency vehicle(s), approaching from the rear on a four-lane or multi-lane highway, should immediately slow down and drive the vehicle as close to the right edge or curb of the roadway as possible, without leaving the roadway. The driver should then continue at a reduced speed until the emergency vehicle(s) has passed. The driver of the school bus should not activate the four-way flashers, (hazard lights), or any other lights on the school bus, which might confuse the operator of the emergency vehicle(s) or other traffic, unless traffic forces the bus to come to a complete stop.

5. Two Lane Roadway where an Emergency Vehicle is approaching a School Bus from the front/rear.

A bus driver observing an emergency vehicle(s), approaching from the front on any two-lane highway, should immediately activate the four-way flashers, (hazard lights), and pull as close to the right edge or curb of the roadway as possible, bringing the vehicle to a complete stop. The driver should remain stopped with the four-way flashers, (hazard lights), activated until the emergency vehicle(s) has passed and it is safe to resume motion.

6. Intersection where a School Bus is stopped waiting for a traffic light to change and an Emergency Vehicle is observed approaching the Intersection. (From any direction)

When the driver of a school bus observes an emergency vehicle(s) approaching an intersection the driver should remain stopped, even if the traffic light changes to green. If the bus is in a left turn lane or positioned to continue straight ahead, the driver should activate the four flashers and remain stopped until the emergency vehicle(s) has cleared the intersection. After checking both the traffic control devices for indication and traffic, resume motion only when it is safe to do so.

7. A School Bus approaching an Intersection controlled by a traffic control device where an Emergency Vehicle is also approaching. (From any direction)

When a school bus driver, approaching an intersection, observes an emergency vehicle(s) approaching an intersection, regardless of the type of traffic control device, the driver should activate the four-way flashers, (hazard lights), and bring the bus to a complete stop prior to entering the intersection, if at all possible. If the emergency vehicle(s) is observed approaching the intersection from the rear of the bus, the driver should activate the four-way flashers, (hazard lights), and stop the bus as far back from the intersection as possible. The driver should remain stopped until the emergency vehicle(s) has passed and cleared the intersection before resuming motion.

8. In a situations where a bus is stopped in preparation for a left or right turn and an Emergency Vehicle is observed approaching. (From any direction)

When a school bus is stopped in preparation for a left or right turn and the driver observes an emergency vehicle(s) approaching from any direction, the driver should remained stopped. A bus driver should never attempt to complete a turn in front of an oncoming emergency vehicle(s). This includes turnabouts and left or right turns, because the length of a bus sometimes blocks both lanes of the roadway on which the bus is negotiating its maneuver.

9. In a situation where a school bus is in the process of negotiating a left turn or has encroached the intersection, especially large intersections such as multi-lane highways and an Emergency Vehicle(s) is observed approaching.

When a school bus driver is in the process of negotiating a left turn, to the point where the vehicle has already entered the intersection, therefore gaining possession or having the right to be there, and an Emergency Vehicle is observed approaching from any direction, the driver should complete the maneuver. Due to the size of the bus, stopping at that point could possibly block the intersection or the view of other motorist from seeing the approaching Emergency Vehicle. Once the bus has cleared the intersection, the driver should check traffic to determine the Emergency Vehicle's direction of travel, taking the necessary precautions, to the point of pulling over to the side of the roadway and stopping.

Important Reminder:

In all cases where an emergency vehicle is observed the driver must always check traffic carefully before resuming motion. Quite often when an emergency vehicle is responding to a call, there just might possibly be several emergency vehicles or several types, (Ambulance, Police, Fire or Rescue), of Emergency vehicles responding to the same location.

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